



NEWS

RELEASE

NORTH FLORIDA DISTRICT OFFICE

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Contact: Lola Kress (904) 443-1933

Email: lola.kress@sba.gov

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Internet Address: www.sba.gov

NATIONAL OMBUDSMAN WEIGHS IMPACT OF FEDERAL REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT UPON SMALL BUSINESSES

ORLANDO – Small business owners with concerns or complaints about burdensome or unfair enforcement of federal rules can voice their comments at a U. S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing in Orlando on January 28th, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Radisson Plaza Orlando, 60 South Ivanhoe Blvd, downtown Orlando.

SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera will conduct the hearing. **“Small businesses want and deserve a fair federal regulatory enforcement process,”** said Barrera. **“They want a common sense approach to problem-solving, and a strong voice in the regulatory process.”**

The SBA, through the national ombudsman, works directly with as many as 28 different federal regulatory agencies to create a more business-friendly regulatory environment and to resolve complaints. Congress created the Office of the National Ombudsman in 1996 with the passage of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

The act established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country. Livia Whisenhunt, President/CEO from Atlanta is a member of the board in region IV, which includes Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

Based in part upon information gathered at these hearings, the national ombudsman prepares an annual report to Congress with findings and recommendations on the regulatory environment and its

effect upon small businesses. Each federal regulatory agency's responsiveness to comments is reviewed in the report.

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No. 02-01, Page 2/Regulatory Fairness Hearing

The national ombudsman's authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts or securing guaranteed loans.

Anyone interested in testifying at the hearing can contact the Office of the National Ombudsman at 202-205-2417, or Wilfredo Gonzalez, the SBA's district director in Jacksonville at 904-443-1933. For more information on the national ombudsman and this hearing, visit the SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

To obtain information on SBA's programs and services in Region IV, call the SBA regional office in Atlanta, GA at (404) 331-4999, or the SBA district office in Jacksonville at (904) 443-1980, or visit the SBA North Florida district office Web site at <http://www.sba.gov/fl/north/>.

The SBA helps small businesses each year with access to capital and credit through its financial assistance programs, as well as providing technical training and business start-up and expansion counseling, disaster loans for businesses and home owners, and federal contracting and procurement assistance. For more information about the SBA go to www.sba.gov or call the SBA's Answer Desk at 1-800 U-ASK-SBA, or TDD 704-344-6640.

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